C. James Carr, Mayor of Wheaton

Library Dedication Ceremony Speech
2 p.m. Sunday, April 15

GOOD AFTERNOON. THANK YOU FOR INVITING TO ME TO SPEAK AT THIS EVENT CELEBRATING A WONDERFUL MILESTONE FOR THE LIBRARY AND FOR WHEATON. I AM HONORED TO STAND BEFORE YOU AND SEE THE RESULTS OF MANY YEARS OF PLANNING AND HARD WORK.

EVER SINCE WHEATON'S FIRST LIBRARY WAS DEDICATED IN 1891, THE WHEATON PUBLIC LIBRARY HAS CELEBRATED A HISTORY OF EXCELLENCE. DESIGNED BY CHARLES SUMNER FROST, A PROMINENT ARCHITECT WHO ALSO DESIGNED CHICAGO'S NAVY PIER, THE FIRST LIBRARY WAS A BEAUTIFUL, ELABORATE BUILDING FOR A TOWN OF NO MORE THAN 2,500 PEOPLE. OFFERING SUCH AN IMPRESSIVE LIBRARY FOR SUCH A SMALL POPULATION WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND WHAT MOST COMMUNITIES COULD PROVIDE.

THIS TRADITION CONTINUED WHEN WHEATON BUILT A NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART 32,000-SQUARE-FOOT LIBRARY IN 1965. THEN, AN ADDITION THAT WAS BUILT BETWEEN 1977 AND 1979 MORE THAN DOUBLED THE SIZE OF THE LIBRARY, MAKING IT 72,000 SQUARE FEET. WHILE THIS WAS A GREAT LEAP IN SIZE FOR THE LIBRARY, OVER TIME, THE WESTERN SUBURBS BOOMED, AND WHEATON DRAMATICALLY GREW IN SIZE. SO TOO DID ITS NEED FOR A LARGER LIBRARY.

THE LIBRARY HAS SUCH EXTENSIVE COLLECTIONS OF NON-FICTION, FICTION, REFERENCE MATERIALS, CHILDREN'S MATERIALS AND AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS THAT IT WAS

BURSTING AT THE SEAMS. AS LIBRARY DIRECTOR SARAH MEISELS SAID, THERE WAS NO NEED FOR BOOKENDS BECAUSE THE BOOKSHELVES WERE PACKED FROM END TO END, SEVEN SHELVES HIGH. BY THE 1990S, THE BUILDING WAS AGING, THE ROOF NEEDED REPLACING AND THE LIBRARY NEEDED UPDATING. TO PROVIDE WHAT RESIDENTS HAD COME TO EXPECT, THE LIBRARY NEEDED SOME MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS.

AFTER MANY YEARS OF PLANNING, THE EXPANSION AND RENOVATION PROCESS BEGAN. ON DECEMBER 9, 2004, I JOINED LIBRARY AND CITY OFFICIALS IN THE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY TO ADD AN ADDITION TO THE EXISTING BUILDING. A PORTION ON THE NORTH BLOCK WAS DEMOLISHED TO MAKE WAY FOR THE THREE-STORY ADDITION.

ONCE THE ADDITION WAS COMPLETE, ALL OF THE COLLECTIONS WERE MOVED TEMPORARILY INTO THE ADDITION SO THAT THE OLDER PORTION COULD BE COMPLETELY REMODELED. THE ADDITION OPENED TO THE PUBLIC ON MARCH 6, 2006, AND THE RENOVATION PROCESS BEGAN ON THE OLD BUILDING. CREWS GUTTED THE EXISTING STRUCTURE AND IMPROVED EVERY SURFACE. ALL THE WHILE, THE LIBRARY REMAINED OPEN FOR RESIDENTS TO USE, OPERATING OUT OF THE ADDITION WITH A TEMPORARY ENTRANCE.

UPON COMPLETION OF THE RENOVATION, THE LIBRARY CLOSED FROM NOVEMBER 2006 THROUGH FEBRUARY 2007 TO MOVE ALL OF THE MATERIALS TO THEIR FINAL DESTINATIONS, BRING IN NEW FURNITURE, REMOVE TEMPORARY WALLS AND MUCH MORE.

ON FEBRUARY 12, 2007, THE NEW LIBRARY OPENED TO THE PUBLIC IN RECORD-SETTING FASHION, WITH 3,400 PEOPLE VISITING THE LIBRARY IN ONE DAY, CHECKING OUT MORE THAN 9,000 ITEMS. THE RESPONSE TO THE NEW LIBRARY HAS CONTINUED TO BE INCREDIBLY POSITIVE, WITH MORE THAN 50,000 RESIDENTS VISITING IN MARCH, CHECKING OUT MORE THAN 115,000 ITEMS.

IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY RESIDENTS ARE EXCITED ABOUT THE NEW LIBRARY AND ALL THAT IT OFFERS. WITH THIS WONDERFUL RENOVATION AND ADDITION, IT IS NOW NEARLY 125,000 SQUARE FEET, AGAIN OFFERING WHEATON RESIDENTS A STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY.

THE BUILDING'S DESIGN, WHICH WAS CREATED BY THE BCA BURNIDGE CASSELL ARCHITECTURAL FIRM, NOW INCORPORATES FABULOUS VIEWS OF ~~THE~~ Adams PARK FROM MANY DIFFERENT SPOTS IN THE LIBRARY. ONE NEW AREA IS PARK VIEW COMMONS, A ROOM OVERLOOKING ~~THE~~ Adams PARK WHERE PEOPLE CAN ENJOY SNACKS AND MEET FRIENDS IN AN INFORMAL ATMOSPHERE. ON THE SECOND FLOOR, A QUIET READING ROOM WITH COMFORTABLE LOUNGE CHAIRS AND A FIREPLACE PROVIDES ANOTHER SPOT TO ENJOY PARK VIEWS.

THE NEW TECHNOLOGY that has been IMPLEMENTED IS ANOTHER MAJOR IMPROVEMENT THAT RESIDENTS CAN ENJOY. FREE WIRELESS INTERNET ACCESS IS NOW AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE FACILITY, AND THE COMPUTER LAB HAS BEEN GREATLY EXPANDED. ALL MEETING ROOMS HAVE AV PROJECTION, AND THERE ARE SEPARATE COMPUTER AREAS

FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS WITH AGE-APPROPRIATE COMPUTER SOFTWARE. THIS SUMMER, THE LIBRARY IS EXPECTED TO LAUNCH SELF-CHECKOUT STATIONS WITH THE HELP OF ITS NEW RFID SYSTEM THAT IS BETTER AND FASTER THAN THE PREVIOUS CHECKOUT SYSTEM.

CHILDREN ALSO GREATLY BENEFIT FROM THE CHANGES. THE CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT, WHICH IS NOW MUCH LARGER, IS DIVIDED INTO TWO AREAS: ONE FOR PRESCHOOLERS AND THE OTHER FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN. EACH SECTION HAS ITS OWN COMPUTER LAB, AND THE CHILDREN'S AREA NOW ALSO HAS ITS OWN SET OF STUDY ROOMS FOR GROUPS OF DIFFERENT SIZES. THE SECTION FOR PRESCHOOLERS ALSO INCLUDES AN ATRIUM WITH CHILD-FRIENDLY FURNITURE AND ACTIVITY STATIONS WHERE YOUNG CHILDREN CAN EXPLORE AND READ COMFORTABLY.

TEENAGERS HAVE A NEW AREA DESIGNED ESPECIALLY FOR THEIR USE. CALLED TEENSPACE, THIS AREA HAS TRENDY-LOOKING FURNITURE, READING MATERIALS FOR TEENS, A COMPUTER LAB AND STUDY ROOMS SPECIFICALLY FOR THEM.

FOR ADULTS, THERE ARE ADDITIONAL STUDY ROOMS TO SERVE GROUPS OF DIFFERENT SIZES. THERE IS A LARGER AUDIO-VISUAL DEPARTMENT ON THE FIRST FLOOR WITH NEW PULL-OUT SHELVES TO EASILY ACCESS THE CD COLLECTION. SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE LIBRARY, RESIDENTS ALSO WILL FIND A NUMBER OF READING AREAS WITH DIFFERENT STYLES OF COMFORTABLE LOUNGE FURNITURE.

ALL OF THESE FEATURES ADD TO THE ALREADY NATIONALLY RANKED STATUS OF THE WHEATON PUBLIC LIBRARY. OUT OF MORE THAN 500 LIBRARIES ACROSS THE NATION WITH A POPULATION OF 50,000 TO 99,000, THE WHEATON PUBLIC LIBRARY RANKS IN THE 98.5 PERCENTILE. THE LIBRARY WAS NAMED A TOP 10 LIBRARY IN THE NATION BY HENNEN'S AMERICAN PUBLIC LIBRARY RATINGS IN 2006. IT EXCELS IN ITS ABILITY TO PROVIDE A WIDE RANGE OF MATERIALS AND SERVICES TO ITS RESIDENTS, WITH A CIRCULATION OF NEARLY 1.2 MILLION ITEMS.

NOW, THE LIBRARY HAS AN OUTSTANDING MODERN BUILDING TO MATCH THE OUTSTANDING SERVICE IT PROVIDES TO ITS RESIDENTS, IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF RESIDENTS' LIVES. I AM PROUD TO SERVE AS MAYOR OF THIS CITY THAT SO GREATLY VALUES ITS LIBRARY, AND I CONGRATULATE THE LIBRARY Board, STAFF AND ~~ALL OF THE PEOPLE~~ everyone INVOLVED ~~IN MAKING~~ who made THIS BEAUTIFUL FACILITY WHAT IT IS TODAY. LET US CELEBRATE TOGETHER AS THE WHEATON PUBLIC LIBRARY CONTINUES ITS TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE.